

The Welfare Rights people, the National Council of Negro Women, the militant Mexican-American Raza people and such liberal celebrities as Walter Reuther and Ralph Abernathy laid down a verbal barrage which obviously failed to penetrate the smug class attitudes of the medical and nutrition "experts" and the exploiters from Pepsi-Cola, Coca-Cola, General Foods Corporation and other representatives of the private food and snack industry.

In my own rather narrow field of interest, human pregnancy nutrition, total chaos prevailed:

1. The special nutritional stress of pregnancy was *not* recognized by members of the Conference panel concerned with nutrition problems of pregnant women, infants and children.

2. The special nutritional problems of our pregnant teenage girls in poverty were not recognized. The primary emphasis of the panel in discussion of teenage pregnancy was placed on *birth control* and *abortion*. The roles of the private soft drink, snack and cigarette industries in teenage malnutrition were *not* examined.

3. The role of starvation and malnutrition in maintaining high infant mortality and the high incidence of low birth weight infants in the U.S.A. poverty areas was *not* recognized.

4. The common nutritional diseases of human pregnancy were not recognized.

5. The total lack of any national *nutrition standards* for the pregnant woman and her unborn fetus was not recognized and no efforts were made to establish such standards.

6. The widespread unscientific clinical nutrition practices established in our public prenatal clinics serving the poor were *not* recognized: inadequate low calorie, low sodium diets, diuretics ("water pills"), amphetamines (Dexidrene®, "speed"), a variety of drug-company sponsored dietary supplements, salt substitutes. This is the present irrational approach of U.S. medicine to the special nutritional stresses of the so-called "low income, high risk prenatal patients."

Throughout this three-day meeting there has been the generally prevailing attitude among the health professionals that nothing is really known about these problems and that the real need is for "more research on hunger and malnutrition among the poor." In the field of human pregnancy nutrition this call for "more research" is the result of rigid class and racial prejudices because the needed research has already been done over the past 40 years by medical researchers here and throughout the world. One urgent need is *to apply*

scientific nutrition in human prenatal care. Another urgent need is to stop exploitation of human pregnancy nutrition by the U.S. private drug, soft drink, snack and cigarette industries. The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health, December 2, 3 and 4, 1969, has been unable to define these problems of our people in poverty and ignorance and hence will be unable to respond to these needs.

The only hope lies in the American people themselves who must in order to solve these deepening problems of unmet human need create new institutions. We must cast off the chains of blind traditions and economic greed which keep our people trapped in poverty and preventable diseases. An obvious and painful lesson from this White House Conference is that we cannot depend upon the present economic system to correct the human abuses and injustices which are the direct result of the system. A nation governed by millionaires cannot feed its starving women and children without removing these millionaires from political power. Let all humane American citizens consider these serious problems which grow more severe with each passing day.

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*Dr. Brewer was invited to the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health.—Editor*

## Female of the M.D. Species

*To the Editor:* The paper by Drs. McGann, Alexander, and Fox, "Chromosomal Abnormality in a Child" (CALIFORNIA MEDICINE 112:30, January, 1970), went a long way towards explaining why there exists such a dearth of female MD's in California. To quote from the paper: "As a general rule, the degree of physical abnormalities and mental retardation increases as the number of x-chromosomes increases."

I admire these doctors for making public their findings in an area of research that still, even after generations of always reaching the same inescapable conclusion of male superiority, affords some measure of contemporary controversy. *Caveat sic.*

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